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ABSTRACT

This collection of works by Native American writers reveals the political use by the U.S. and Canadian governments of schooling, adoption, and child welfare services to erase tribal identity and sovereignty. Seven tales in part 1 reflect various Native perspectives about the value and place of children in Native cultures. They provide background for understanding the struggles of those whose personal reflections appear in this anthology: Native people who were subject to forced cultural assimilation through education, child welfare, and other impositions in the United States and Canada. The boarding school experience is examined in part 2. The first piece presents the White perspective of the ideal assimilated boarding school graduate. The other six pieces explore the emotional, physical, and spiritual damage inflicted by boarding schools, as well as the strength and resilience of Indian students. After 1950, the child welfare system replaced the residential school system as the instrument of colonial control. In part 3, the more damaging aspects of Native American child welfare practices emerge in testimony, autobiography, and fiction. The stories, poems, and autobiographical essays in part 4 intend to break various silences, whether imposed through the suppression of language, culture, family history, or parentage, or created through the agency of law, education, or foster and adoptive homes. The destructiveness of such adoptions and the promise that adoption need not be practiced in those terms are made clear. (Contains 67 references.) (TD)

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